DC COMICS

#1A

OF 7

# BEYOND THE FRINGE™

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# BEYOND THE FRINGE

## Peter and the Machine
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34 03.36.51 N 118 21.21.62 W

I've never been afraid of dying. The truth is, we're all dying. From the moment we're born, we're dying.

And life is just a series of bad choices and regrets in between.

Life is the thing to be afraid of.

Maybe you would have wanted me to make a different choice. Maybe I should have.

Turned Walter away, taken care of Ella, protected the world you left behind.

But I can't live in a world without you. You were everything to me.

And, if Walter is right, the world can't live without you either. Neither of them can.

"SHE DOESN'T HAVE TO DIE, PETER. NONE OF THIS HAS TO HAPPEN. WE CAN STOP IT. IT'S NOT TOO LATE!"

THERE. WONDERFUL. THE MARKERS HAVE BEGUN BROADCASTING THEIR CO-ORDINATES, SO THE PIECES CAN BE PLACED JUST WHERE WE FOUND THEM. NOW ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TAKE "DAISY" BACK.

YOU NAMED THE MACHINE "DAISY?"

IT'S FINDING THE LIGHT IN DARK TIMES, PETER.

LAST TIME I USED "DAISY" I DESTROYED A UNIVERSE. I DON'T EVEN LIKE LOOKING AT IT.

CENTRAL PARK, NYC. 2026.

YES, YES, BUT YOU WON'T THIS TIME. WE'RE GOING TO DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN. THE MACHINE IS CALIBRATED TO THE WORMHOLE'S RADIATION READINGS AND YOUR DNA SIGNATURE. SHE'LL BREAK APART IN THE WORMHOLE, JUST AS BEFORE, BUT HER PIECES WILL BE DRAWN TO YOU. THEY'LL APPEAR WHERE YOU DO. YOU JUST HAVE TO PLACE THEM ON THE MARKERS. OF COURSE, TIME TRAVEL IS SUCH A STICKY BUSINESS.

NATURALLY.

WE'RE SENDING HER BACK IN TIME, RE-STARTING THE CYCLE. WHEN YOU STEP INTO THE MACHINE AGAIN IN 2011 SHE SHOULD BRING YOU *FORWARD* IN TIME, TO THIS EXACT YEAR, AND YOU'LL WITNESS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU MAKE THE SAME CHOICE.

SOMETIMES I WISH YOU WERE JUST MAKING THIS STUFF UP.

THE DETAILS WILL WORK THEMSELVES OUT. BUT YOU *HAVE* TO MAKE A DIFFERENT CHOICE, PETER. THE UNIVERSES CAN'T EXIST WITHOUT EACH OTHER.

YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE TO SAVE THEM *BOTH*. THAT'S THE ONLY WAY TO SAVE OLIVIA. HAND ME THAT WIRE.

SO WE'VE ALREADY SENT THE MACHINE BACK IN TIME? WE'VE DONE ALL THIS BEFORE?

OH, YES. AN INFINITE NUMBER OF TIMES.

WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION BEFORE.

I IMAGINE SO. FASCINATING, ISN'T IT?

BUT THAT MEANS I'VE ALREADY *SEEN* THE CONSEQUENCES. I'VE SEEN THIS FUTURE. SO WHY DO I ALWAYS MAKE THE SAME CHOICE?

THAT I DON'T KNOW. ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER THAT, PETER.

IS IT READY?

MAYBE WE SHOULD WAIT. I SAW A CUMULONIMBUS CLOUD THIS MORNING-- WHAT IF IT RAINS? YOU COULD ELECTROCUTE YOURSELF ALL OVER "DAISY."

IT'S A LOOP, REMEMBER? WE ALREADY KNOW I SURVIVE THIS PART.

I DON'T KNOW IF IT WORKS THAT WAY. SOMETHING COULD GO WRONG. I'M NOT SURE EXACTLY WHAT WILL HAPPEN.

WALTER. I TRUST YOU.

THANK YOU, SON.

WE'LL SEND "DAISY" FIRST. THEN YOU.

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF IT WORKED?

WE'LL CEASE TO EXIST. THERE MAY BE PAIN.

THEN WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR? NOTHING COULD BE WORSE THAN THIS.

CLICK

WHOOOOSH

RRRRWWWRRRR

RRRWWWMBB....

IT'S WORKING...

BOOOM

WALTER!!

POOM

PETER!!!

WHOOOOSH

SHOOOP

FZZZZT...

HHHNGHHH...

AAAAH!

POP

OW!

BEEP... BEEP...

TARGET ACQUIRED

So if I really just saw a Dimetrodon and I'm **NOT** suffering from a major brain hemorrhage, then I'm somewhere in the late Paleozoic era. Which means I'm living every 9-year-old's dream.

So it's just me and the big lizards, what could possibly go wrong?

The Machine broke apart in the wormhole. Only one piece made it through with me and, as Walter promised, it's responding to my DNA. So far, all according to plan.

To be honest, none of this feels real. But writing it all down helps.

In the morning, I'll set the first piece, and hopefully be on my way...I don't know how long it will take me...

...but what does time mean anymore?

...THE HELL?

...YOU'RE QUIETER THAN I EXPECTED.

YOU'RE NOT DUE FOR A FEW MILLION YEARS, BUDDY.

THAT'S A... YOU'RE A...

I THINK AN ARCHEOLOGIST SOMEWHERE JUST WON A BET. UNLESS I'M NOT THE ONLY TIME TRAVELER AROUND.

I THINK I WROTE THAT STORY IN ENGLISH CLASS WHEN I WAS NINE. DINOSAUR TIME TRAVELER, FIGHTING CRIME AND SOLVING MYSTERIES ALONGSIDE HIS BOMBSHELL SIDEKICK, LADY PTERODACTYL...

SCREE

WHOOM

WELL, THAT'S NOT GOOD.

...NOT ENOUGH TIME...

WHOOOOSH

...NEVER ENOUGH TIME...

...OK.

BEEP... BEEP...

TARGET ACQUIRED

NATURALLY.

CITY OF PELLA. 356 BC.

As you've probably gathered by now, the **MARKERS** weren't just scattered in the Paleozoic. They're scattered through **TIME.** I'd like to go back and ask the first guy who did this why he made it so difficult.

This is going to take much longer than it needs to. But maybe there's a reason for that. Maybe I was trying to delay the inevitable, delay having to make that choice...

(OH GREAT DIONYSUS, WE BESEECH YOU.*)

*TRANSLATED FROM GREEK

Hmmm. Dionysus... The twice born god. Of course.

No...It can't be her...

...Not now... and for me, never again.

Time to get to work.

AAHHH!!!

SPLASH

SPLASH

AAHHH!!!

HSSSSS

Butterfly effect my ass...

SHLOOM

YOU REMIND ME OF SOMEONE I KNOW.

<THIS WAS HIS WILL. HOW DARE YOU CHEAT YOUR QUEEN OF HER FATE!>

SLAP

NOW YOU REALLY REMIND ME OF SOMEONE I KNOW.

NA EINAI KALYTERA ANTHROPO APO TON PATERA TOY.*

POP

* "MAY HE BE A BETTER MAN THAN HIS FATHER."

42 14.47.10 N 71 03.50.53 W, 5000BC.

TARGET ACQUIRED

Finally. Three months I have been looking for this marker. Three months out here in silence.

Too long to be alone with my thoughts. Too long to wonder why I never made the right choice before. Does everything happen as it should? Are we bound by fate and destiny?

I would never have believed that before I got into the machine, yet there I was... given the power to choose between universes.

And my choice led me here. Where I must choose again and again...

CHUNK

But then why? Why go through with the whole thing? If everything is pre-determined then every choice, every action is a farce. And isn't the point of science, of human achievement, to change the world for the better? To change our destinies for the better?

I think I'm losing my mind.

KYOTO, JAPAN. 900AD.

TARGET ACQUIRED

Maybe this is all a fever dream. Maybe that Machine exploded and hit me in the head and I'm lying in a hospital bed right now.

BILBAO, SPAIN. 1147AD.

I'm starting to forget what your voice sounded like; that voice that was just for me.

SHAOYANG, CHINA. 1225AD.

But if it's not a dream, what happens when the pieces are gone?

And I have to make that choice?

TARGET ACQUIRED

TARGET ACQUIRED

HY-BRASIL, UNKNOWN.

*What if I make the wrong one? Will I watch you die over and over again?*

SWISH

NO!

BLAM

*It can't be. This isn't how it ends...I have to make it right.*

NOT YET. NO. I CAN FIX THIS.

OLIVIA. OLIVIA, I'M SO SORRY. I TRIED. I'M SO SORRY.

NO! I DO NOT ACCEPT THIS! I CAN FIX IT! I CAN SAVE HER!! THIS IS NOT HOW IT ENDS!

TO BE CONTINUED...